

**Citizen Policy Trade Commission
Summary of Public Hearing Testimony
November 21, 2005
Southside Middle School
Houlton**

Chris Stark of Winterport submitted written testimony. See attached.

Donald Flannery, Executive Director, Maine Potato Board submitted written testimony – see attached

Marilyn Roper of Houlton indicated a lack of publicity affected the number of people in attendance. She thanked the Commission for their help and their existence because many jobs had been lost due to trade agreements. She commented that Canadian companies could hire people from Houlton to build modular homes in Maine instead of bringing in Canadians.

James Cook, a Teamster from Aroostook County commented that under NAFTA they could bring in union nurses and he was not a union member because of this. If have a trade agreement with another country and there is a large difference in wages between the countries, a WTO tribunal may split the difference and then that person who is paid very little in his country can work in the U.S. for half the wage a union worker would get normally.

Rep. Carr asked if nurses coming in had a B.A. and don't have to be licensed and was answered that they don't need a B.A. but need to be licensed.

Dr. Weiss asked if the nurses were licensed by Maine and was answered that he didn't know but would find out.

Dr. Weiss also asked who set the wage standards under Mode 4 and was answered that it was not official - it is part of the GATS negotiations but nothing has happened yet.

Max Soucy of the Caribou UU church commented on the spiritual well-being of the people in Aroostook County. He has a Master's degree and is unable to find a job comparable to a Master's degree. He makes \$8.60 an hour with no insurance. He commented that Aroostook County is losing people, most with higher education. Employers there are not paying health insurance for their workers. The businesses that are able to compete are ones that don't have to compete with larger companies. Companies that move in take advantage of low wages. There is a lot of inertia that must be overcome before things will change.

He indicated it would be good to divert some money going to economic development and give it to businesses that are either locally or employee owned, so the area doesn't have to worry about those jobs going overseas. Some money used for development should go to Co-ops and worker owned companies.

He later added that NAFTA and CAFTA pre-date the problems but have done little to help and has actually accelerated the decline of business here. Not all of the problems are related to fair trade. We need support and encouragement to start businesses here and we can do it.

Tim Hobbs from the Maine Potato Board commented that Canadians are killing the spud local growers. If spud processors in Canada want to get spuds from Maine the other two Canadian Provinces would have to agree they can't supply the spuds before the processor could turn to Maine for the spuds. Twenty-five years ago there were about 100,000 acres planted with potatoes and last year Maine raised about 55,000 acres. The

Canadian acreage has increased significantly. He indicated he would follow up his statements with more details and written testimony he'd send in.

He said that Canadian shippers could ship potatoes into Maine at anytime of year and yet it didn't work the other way around as potatoes flowed more easily into Maine than into Canada. Maine growers export very little of their crop to other places in the world. We are working cooperatively with others regarding potatoe diseases but when it comes to the marketing it is much harder. He suggested taking a look at state policies such as water issues as those may have as much of an impact on the industry as trade issues. Potato growers are not too please with how NAFTA has worked so they did not support CAFTA.

Cindy Manual of Littleton runs a consulting business and commented that Maine and Aroostook County should be very aggressive in attention to trade issues as they must be able to compete on a global scale or they'll fail. They must be able to work with Canada as there were some inequities such as with softwood. She indicated Maine needed to be promoting Maine products and businesses globally, especially with Canada and New Brunswick.

Harrison Roper, a community member questioned comments he'd heard about the US slipping toward 3rd world type status.

Hannah Semler, a College of the Atlantic student related her experience concerning customers and corn production in Mexico. The people tried to stop the flow of genetically modified corn into the area. People need to look for ways to work against the trade agreements as they impact local groups. There also needs to be a way to put checks and balances into the CAFTA agreements like those that exist in NAFTA.

Elsie Flemmings, a College of the Atlantic student commented that she was concerned about the passage of CAFTA and that it would have a devastating effect on farming in Latin America.